

Phelps Helps



Volume 17, Issue 4

Winter 2009

Meetings held at the Nebraska Prairie Museum on the first Monday of the month at 2:00 PM.

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Christian Children's Home

1890—1954

Christian Children's Home was home to thousands of children through the years of the home's existence. The first home was southwest of Holdrege in Section 1 of Laird Township where the second county seat of Phelps County once stood. The home remained there until 1926 when a new home was built through private donations. The home was built just west of Holdrege and is now used as a home for the elderly.

Below are news articles from some of the children at the Children Christian Home near Holdrege, Nebraska. This was one way to help advertise the home and their need for donations to assist in the orphanage and to find homes for some of their children. One article is dated 1938 and it is believed that all these articles were written about that time.

**From the Guide Rock Signal,
Guide Rock, Nebraska
Christian Children's Home,
Holdrege, Nebraska**

By H. A. Gustin, Superintendent

(This letter would have been in 1933 as that is when Holdrege was celebrating it's 50th anniversary.)

"Dear Readers of the Signal, This has been a very busy as well as interesting week with us.

Last Thursday afternoon most of the delegates attending annual convention of the League of Nebraska Municipalities, held here from Wednesday to Friday, visited with us. We were indeed very happy to see them here.

Holdrege is having a big time here this week celebrating its Golden Anniversary. This afternoon we were all taken in to see the big parade of Progress. The Home had two floats in the parade and will use them again tomorrow morning in another big parade sponsored by the town and city schools of this county.

Mrs. Gustin is leaving tonight for Chicago where a good home as been found for "the Home's baby", Mr. Gustin, our superintendent is leaving about the same time for Greeley and Eaton, Colorado to gather money and also potatoes for the Home.

Your Friend, Lo Whitaker"

"Dear Friends, Yesterday the Willing Workers Club of Orleans (Letters Continued on page 7)

New On The Bookshelf...

Family Histories

- Carol Perkins – Sjogren Family History, Harlan County, NE
- Phelps Freburg – Sod and Stubble, Ise and Hoag Family, Sweden to Phelps County
- Christopher Chisholm – Renquist Genealogy, Phelps County
- Phyllis Vandell – The Sparks Quarterlies
- Unknown – Wall and Tillotson Family Photos

Church Histories

- Curley Geer – Abstractions of Atlanta Nebraska United Methodist Church Records 1885-1985
- Atlanta United Methodist Church Centennial History Book 1885-1985

Town Histories

- Dick Dyas – Sprague Community Church, 100 years of History 1893-1993

United States

- Dick Dyas – Cemetery Inscriptions, Poultney, Vermont
- Dorothy Richmond – Tennessee Records
- Early Pennsylvania Research
- Pennsylvania Genealogical Research
- Jewel County Kansas Cemeteries, Vol. 1, 2, 3
- State of Illinois (Including 23 maps showing the original and present borders of each county.)
- New York Genealogical Biographical Record 1964
- Phelps Freburg – Bluff to Bluff Too, The 1935 Flood

Other Countries

- Dick Dyas – Passenger Lists from Ireland
- The Beginners Guide to Danish Genealogical Research

Miscellaneous

- Dick Dyas – The Detroit Society for Genealogical Research
- The Family Heritage Book

- Dorothy Richmond – Fundamentals of Genealogical Research
- The Researcher Guide to American Genealogy
- National Society of Daughters of the American Colonists
- 8,000 Little Used Biography and Genealogy Sources
- Handy Guide to English Genealogical Records 1962
- National Genealogical Society Quarterly, March 1988
- Ben and Dixie Boell – Lest We Forget, A Guide to Genealogical Research in the Nation's Capitol
- Land and Property Research in the United States
- Handy Book For Genealogists, ninth edition
- Phelps Freburg – A Journey Through the Central District
- Dorothy Peterson – Swedish Dictionary

Eliza Suggs of Orleans, Nebraska ...continued...

Part 2 from the book, "SHADOW AND SUNSHINE" by ELIZA SUGGS of Orleans, Nebraska.

OMAHA, NEB. 1906

Sketch of Father Cont'd.

One day the news came that the "Yankees" were within four miles of Ripley, the village near which Mr. Suggs lived. They were reported as having a heavy force of both cavalry and infantry. Mr. Suggs was a very wealthy man and had a large number of fine horses and carriages, as well as great herds of cattle and sheep. All these he must hide, as best he could, from the "Yankees," for they were

NOTE: The Phelps Helps Newsletter highlights Harlan County in this section. With many of our subscribers interested in and from Harlan County, and since Harlan County is a connecting county to Phelps County, the Phelps Helps will publish history information on Harlan County.

very destructive to the property of the southerners. So he called his men to gather up his belongings, as far as possible, and take them to the cane-brake to hide them. The canes grow so thickly together, and the leaves so interwoven, as to make it

impossible to see any object at a distance of even a few feet. So a cane-brake was a fine place for hiding.

Mr. Suggs called James and told him to take his sheep and go at once to the cane-brake, which

(Suggs Continued on page 3)

(Suggs Continued from page 2)

he did. Little did my mother think, as she saw him go, that this would be the last she would see of James for three years and nine months. But so it was to be. When the "Yankees" came, a colored man took them and showed them where these treasures were hidden, together with the belongings of several neighbors. The soldiers helped themselves to whatever they wanted; and told the slaves that any who wanted to do so might go with them. Father thought his time had come to strike for liberty. He went into the war and fought for his freedom and that of his family, and obtained it as a well-earned victory.

Many of the slaves, in making their escape north with the Union army, took with them their wives and children. So father fondly hoped he could get some soldiers to come back with him to get mother and the four children. He knew but little of army life and discipline, and so was bitterly disappointed in never getting back.

When the excitement was over and the soldiers gone, and some of the slaves came back to the plantation, father did not appear. Mr. Suggs came to mother and said, "Malinda, where is James?" "I don't know," said mother. "Didn't you send him off with the sheep?" But he would not believe her when she said she didn't know. He blamed her for father's going away, and thought she had put him up to go.

Father enlisted in 1864, but was wounded shortly after and discharged from active service and sent to the hospital. After recovering from his wound, he joined the regular service and continued until the close of the war, part of the time acting as corporal of his company. When the war was over, he came north with his captain, Mr. Newton. The thought uppermost in his mind, was how to get his family from the south. For him to have gone after them, in person, at that time, would have been at the risk of his life. Mr. Newton, having business in the

south, and being a kind-hearted man, father begged of him to go and find his family and bring them to him. This Captain Newton did, finding them not far from where father had left them.

Father now went to work with great zeal at his trade to earn money for the purpose of getting a home for his family. He was at last a free man, with his dear family--a free family, and living in his own free country. The slaves could not be married as white people were; for there was a clause in the marriage ceremony which gave the slave-holder the right to separate husband and wife whenever he chose to do so. I have heard my mother say that she has known instances where husband and wife have been separated after having been married only a few weeks, or even only a few days. My father said that seeing he was now a free man, he wanted to be married like other free people. So on the fifth day of June, in 1866, father and mother were married again according to the Christian rites, or according to the white man's law.

Father continued to work at his trade until God called him to preach the Gospel. He had a great struggle over his call to preach. He had worldly ambitions and was making money, and it was hard for him to give up all and follow Christ. Finally he consented to preach, but did not go at it with his whole heart. He would preach occasionally, but still worked at his blacksmithing, until one night the Lord spoke to him plainly. He said it was like an audible voice saying, "Either preach the Gospel or work at your trade." He was to make his choice, but it meant to him heaven or hell. Which would he take? He trembled as he felt the responsibility of leading lost souls to Christ. But he made his choice and said, "Yes," to God. He began preaching around in school houses. Large crowds gathered to hear him, and from that time on, it was the business of his life to minister Divine truth to dying men and women.

(Suggs Continued on page 4)

(Suggs Continued from page 3)

In 1874 he was given exhorter's license, by Rev. C. E. Harroun, Jr., in the Illinois Conference of the Free Methodist church. In 1878 he was given a local preacher's license by Rev. Edwin C. Best, pastor of the Sheffield circuit, Galva district, of the Illinois Conference. In 1879 he was ordained deacon in

the Illinois Conference, by General Superintendent B. T. Roberts, and in 1884, in the West Kansas Conference, he was ordained elder by General Superintendent E. P. Hart.

His labors during the early years of his ministry were in the Illinois Conference.

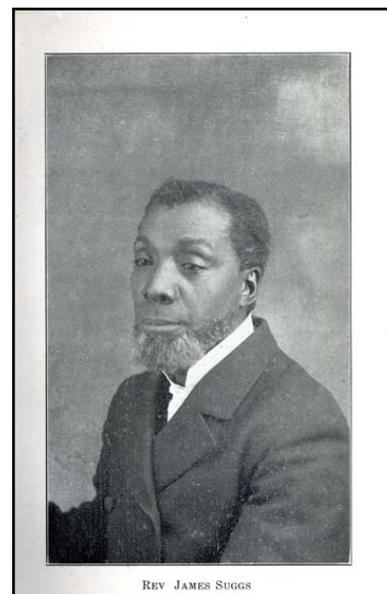
Rev. C. W. Sherman came to Princeton, where we lived, with a band of workers and held a tent meeting. This band consisted of C. L. Lamberts and wife, F. D. Brooke, and Lizzie Bardell, now his wife; D. M. Smashey, and Belle Christie, now his wife. These band workers have since developed into prominent preachers and evangelists in the Free Methodist church, some of them having filled the office of district elder for several years. They were at this time entertained in our home. While the meeting was in progress one night the rowdies gathered, cut down the large tabernacle and threw stones into the small tents. Brother Sherman tried to persuade them to desist when one struck him in the eye, nearly putting out his eye. Brother Smashey received a cut in his head, from which pools of blood stood around the tent.



Eliza Suggs, Age 16

Next morning my father looked down toward the camp ground and saw that the tent was down, and he and mother went down with sorrowful hearts to comfort the workers. Brother Sherman met them with a joyful, "Praise the Lord, Sister Suggs, I shall preach tonight if I haven't either eye." And he did, with a bandage around his eye. And with another bandage around Brother Smashey's head, they looked like soldiers after a battle. The Lord gave a grand victory, for the hearts of the people were turned toward them in sympathy. A good collection was taken to defray the expenses of the meeting, the tent was raised, and the meeting went on with power. Souls were saved and added to the small society already organized in that place. The city authorities promised protection from future disturbance, and kept their promise.

... Eliza Suggs' book, Shadow And Sunshine to be continued in the next issue of *Phelps Helps*



REV JAMES SUGGS

Christian Children's Home Christmas List for 1948

Phelps People Again Asked to Play
Mr. Goodfellow for Children's Home Kiddies
Dec 1948

(We have several of these Christmas lists in our library. The lists are a favorite for the former residents who come to find information about the Children's Home.)

For many years Phelps County People have been Santa Claus for the children at the Christian Children's Home.

The time has arrived again for the people of this area to play Mr. Goodfellow to the kiddies at the home.

Last year, as in the past, the children at the home were made happy by the generosity of the people of this community. Lets do our part again.

This year the Christmas lists 69 names of boys and girls at the home. You, your neighbors and friends are asked to select names from the list and make it a happy Christmas for the child you select.

The kiddies have listed their desires for a happy Christmas. In some instances the items suggested are



very expensive. In those cases only one of the items need to be purchased. In cases where the wants of the children are all inexpensive, the "Goodfellow" may buy all three of the suggested gifts.

Drop in at the Citizen office and select the name of

the child you wish to make happy. Employees will check your name choice off the list. After the gifts have been purchased, bring them to the Citizen office where they will be kept until the day before Christmas and then delivered to the home. Here is a complete list of names:

Boys

Johnny McMann, age 4—little play truck, toy watch, color book; Jerry Hawes, age 4—color book, toy watch, play truck; Dennie Hawes, age 5—toy puppy, color book, toy watch; Delbert Broberg, age 6—sled, flashlight, toy watch; Lance Hawes, age 6—ball game, truck; Gary McFarland, age 6—train, fire truck, car; Jerry Pool, age 6—car, cowboy suit, fire truck; Carl Stone, age 6—train, flashlight, truck; Louis Anderson, age 7—fire truck, Eversharp pencil, Shootin' Star (marble game); Kenneth Stone, age 7—basketball, tinker toys, marble game; Richard Banta, age 8—train, airplane, dump truck; Bobbie Broberg, age 8—overshoes (size 3), combination lock, pocket watch; Jimmy Brown, age 8—combination lock, cowboy suit, sled; Leroy Dogget, age 8—combination lock, pocket watch, football; Freddie Broberg, age 9—pocket watch, flash light, overshoes (size 3 ½); Sterling Fastenau, age 9—overshoes (size 3), cowboy suit, football; Stanley Fastenau, age 9—cowboy suit, Eversharp, caterpillar; Edgar Smith, age 9—football suit, combination lock, "Finance" game; Jackie Stone, age 9—sled, cap, game; Louis Everedge, age 9—football, flashlight, game; Lloyd Banta, age 10—flashlight, sled, game; Tommy Castle, age 10—flashlight, sled and game; Larry Doggett, age 10—fountain pen, first aid kit, stationery; Jack Evans, age 10—baseball, glove, game; George Jacobson, age 10—erection set, flashlight, toy racer; Gerald McMann,

(Christmas Continued on page 6)

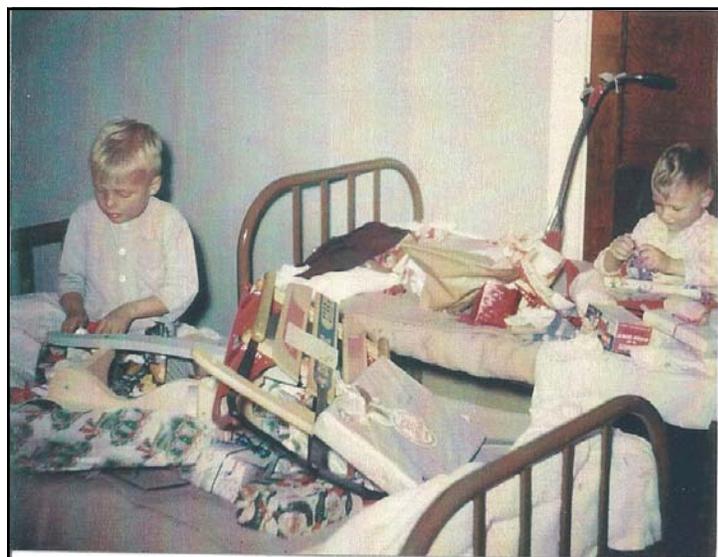
(Christmas Continued from page 5)

age 10–Bible, football, Eversharp; Teddy Broberg, age 11–first aid kit, fountain pen, wind-up toy; Luther Smith, age 11–flashlight, Eversharp, wind-up toy; Marion Anderson, age 11–billfold, overshoes (size 3), wagon; Dale Poole–roller skates, tolls, game; Harold Anderson, age 13–watch, flashlight. Zipper billfold; Donald Anderson, age 14–zipper billfold, notebook; Alfred Regelin, age 14–flashlight, basketball set, football; Orville Poole, age 15–zipper notebook, purple & gold jacket (size 40), purple sweater (size 38); LaGrant Exstrom, age 16, dress gloves, size 9 ½, plain, blue slip over sweater, a subscription to the sports magazine, Varsity; Vance Johnson, age 17–wrist watch, ring or zipper notebook, tennis shoes, size 8; Richard Combs, age 17–one good harmonica with instructions; Henry Poole, age 17–basketball knee guards, a two bow necktie; Leonard Smith, age 15–pocket watch, gloves (size 8 1/2).

Girls

Lynda Johnson, age 3–dishes, doll, little truck; Bonnie McFarland, age 5–doll with extra clothes, color book, dishes; Betty Ann Banta, age 5–doll, dishes, ball; Twila McMann, age 5–doll and doll clothes, dishes, roller skates; Helen Jacobson, age 7–doll, Bible, piano; Neva Johnson, age 7–doll and doll's clothes, doll buggy, skates; Alice McMann, age 7–doll, typewriter, piano; Peggy Castle, age 9–doll and doll clothes, doll buggy, piano; Sharon Rogers, age 9–Bible, doll, necklace; Alice Poole, age 10–hair brush, Eversharp, sweater, size 34; Darlene Banta, age 11–red boots (size ____), zipper notebook, barrettes; Joanne Johnson, age 11–Bible, roller skates, doctor set; Sondra Tillotson, age 11–doll, pen and pencil set, necklace; Juanita Rogers, age 12–zipper notebook, zipper billfold, zipper Bible; Marian McMann, age 12–pen and pencil set, billfold, doll; Donna Wilcox, age 12–Bible, roller

skates, barrettes; Betty Tillotson, age 13–zipper billfold, twin sweaters, size 36, red rubber boots, size 5 ½; Dixie Bennett, age 13–nylon hair brush, stationery, boots; Carrie Combs, age 13–billfold, locket, zipper notebook; Patricia Rogers, age 14–zipper leather notebook, zipper bible, zipper billfold; Delores Exstrom, age 14–red corduroy pencil skirt, size 38, zipper notebook, kid leather gloves, size 7; Donna Fastenau, age 14–zipper notebook, a pair of white over boots (size 9), figured sweater, size 38; Darlene Bennett, age 15–ballerina skirt (size 26), white blouse (size 34), notebook; Cleone Wermeskerch, age 15–locket, purple and gold wool button down sweater (size 38), gray corduroy skirt (waist 30); Roberta Anderson, age 17–purple and gold wool button down sweater (size 38), locket, gray corduroy or wool skirt (waist 28); Charlotte Carlson, age 17–Bible with concordance, girls tailored shirt (size 34), white head scarf; Doris Ann Wermeskerch, age 16–red over boots (size 8), plaid skirt (size 28), button down sweater (size 38); Betty Jane Peterson, age 17–red over boots (size 8), locket, purple and gold sweater; Amanda Landgren, age 18–white long sleeved blouse; light blue long sleeved button down sweater (size 40), white head scarf.



(Letters Continued from page 1)

came to visit us. We were very glad to have them come.

I have been here almost four years. I am eleven years old and in 6th grade. I have two brothers here. The one is in eleventh grade and the other in eighth grade.

Some of the children go to vacation Bible school. It lasts two weeks.

Monday and Tuesday we went to Shumard's Barber Shop. We go there about once a month. (This letter is dated 1938)

*Your Friend,
Melba Smith"*

"Dear Readers of the Signal: I am glad that is my turn to write you again.

Six new children came to the Home about three weeks ago. One of our smallest children, Betty Lou, has left the Home. We miss her very much.

Yesterday several ladies from Minden were here. We were very glad to have them come and are thankful to them for the thing that they gave us.

Last week we had a very nice time when we went to see the parade in Holdrege. I rode on the Orphan's Home float.

We are studying about the early history of

Nebraska now. We have our sand table fixed up with Indians.

Next week we expect to have two days of vacation as our teachers are going to the convention in Holdrege.

*Your Friend,
Warren Borge"*

"Dear Readers, I have a brother and two sisters living here. We have been here for many years.

My work now is to take care of the girl's wash-room downstairs. I try to keep it clean.

We have been taking examinations as school this week. I am in third grade. We have 30 children in our room now.

Two boys and two girls in our room took 8th grade graduations yesterday. I hope they will pass.

Yesterday we drew some snowmen for our artwork. We outlined them with black ink. We are pasting snowmen on our windows too.

We have Sunday School here each Sunday afternoon.

*Your Friend,
Mary Hopkins"*

(Letters Continued on page 8)



(Letters Continued from page 7)

"Dear Friends,

This is the first time I have written to you this year.

We were glad that it snowed as we have had so much fun playing in it. One of our boys made a big snowman in the front yard. He has a tin can for a hat and is holding a broom.

I am in the fourth grade. We are making a Holland scene on our sand table as we are studying about it now in Geography.

My work now is to help in the dining room. We change work every two weeks so my work next will be to wash dishes.

Tuesday and Wednesday evenings we went to the barbershop. We always enjoy this trip and we are thankful to the barbers who are willing to do so much for us.

Your Friend,

Lillie Holmes"

"Dear Readers:

I am a little girl ten years old. I used to live on a farm northeast of Loomis. My sister, two brothers and I came here three years ago.

The seventh and eighth grades got their examination grades back last Tuesday. They all got pretty good grades. We are all glad they did.

Some of us children are going to give a program at Westmark Sunday evening. I am going to sing a song with another girl named Ella Jackson. The name of the song is "The Name So Dear."

Today some ladies from Holdrege came here to sew for us. They are making some dresses for the bigger girls.

Mr. Gustin has been planting some flowers and bushes in the yard. He has also planted most of the garden. Several of the boys help to take care of the gardens.

Your Friend,

Ruth Nelson"

"Dear Friends,

I am a boy eleven years old. I came from Chicago about five years ago. Three of my brothers are here with me.

Raymond Bard celebrated his birthday yesterday. He had 10 candles on his cake. Everybody gets a birthday cake with candles for his birthday. We treat those who are setting at our table.

Last Friday we had many visitors. The pupils from four rural schools with their teachers came to visit us. They had picnic dinners at Holdrege Park, since this was their last day of school.

Yesterday, the Hastings Presbyterian Missionary Society was here. They are having a convention in Holdrege.

Your Friend,

Allen Borge"



1878 Christmas from Rolf Johnson's Diary

December 24th – Christmas Eve: Got a letter from Swan Nelson at Wood River in which he tells me that my favorite at that place, Rosa Jessop, is married to Fred Risland. Spent the evening with Thilda Danielson, Annie Allen, and Anna Maria at the Danielson homestead.

The old folks have gone down to School Creek to spend the holidays and the girls had fixed up a Christmas tree (a small straight cedar, which I brought from the bluffs) with candles, gilt paper and rosettes

presenting a pretty and attractive sight. We had an elegant supper and a pleasant evening.

December 25 – I slept at the Danielson's last night and this morning we got up at 5 o'clock and Thilda, Annie, Allen and I went over to the Emigrant House to attend "Jul-otte," a time honored custom of Swedes. There was quite a press of people and the house was prettily lighted with a large number of candles.

The services were over at 9 o'clock a. m. and I went with

Nick Brunzell home and stayed for breakfast and dinner. Took supper with Tillie this evening at Johannes Anderson's. The weather is pretty cold.

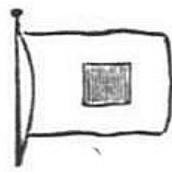
December 26 – Father, Emil and I took the sleigh ride to church. We brought Thilda D, Julius, Oscar, and Thilda Carlson with us home to dinner and had a pleasant afternoon. After supper Julius and Oscar went away and I accompanied the two Thilda's over to the Danielson's, where we spent the evening in a wild Christmas Frolic.

U.S. Signal Flags Told 1888 Weather in Holdrege, Nebraska

A branch of the U. S. Signal Service was established in October of 1888. J. D. Cogswell was the local superintendent and displayed the colored weather flags top a 30-foot flagpole on his drug store building on the corner of East Avenue and Hayden Street.

Weather forecasts came to Holdrege by telegraph and were

communicated to the public by means of the flags. The six foot square white flag indicated fair weather; the square blue flag, rain or snow; the triangular black flag referred to the temperature, and the square white



flag with small black square indicated a sudden and decided fall in temperature.

Combinations of flags were used for example, the square white flag with the triangular black flag below indicated fair weather and colder; the blue flag with the triangular flag above it, indicated rain or snow with

Cold Horses Get Restless Nugget—December 17, 1884

The present cold snap causes horses to be restless and it pays to tie your teams carefully. Monday evening a team broke loose and would have done dam-

age had not the marshal caught them. Tuesday as the Kearney mail carrier was hooking up his team and at Ruby and Latta's barn they got away and ran around

town for some time breaking a spindle and otherwise damaging the vehicle, but fortunately hurting no one.

Time To Send In Dues For 2010

It is time to send in your \$10 dues for the Phelps Helps newsletter for next year. Your support is so important for our club and our Genealogy Library! We continue to add books, microfilm and CDs to our collection.



All members can submit queries for the newsletter and stories that are pertinent to Phelps or Harlan County, Nebraska history. Please let us know if you have a suggestion for an article.

Dues for 2010 are \$10.

Our address is:

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